



Trout Fishing in Missouri

Celebrate a Missouri tradition

On March 1, thousands of anglers gather at Maramec Spring Park, Roaring River State Park, Montauk State Park, and Bennett Spring State Park to welcome spring and shake off the winter blues. The four trout parks stock approximately 30,000 trout in anticipation of nearly 10,000 anglers on opening day. This event is not only about the start of trout fishing, but more like a family reunion. It is a time when longtime friends and family gather together to celebrate a Missouri tradition that has roots as far back as the late 1920s. Trout fishing has remained popular with Missourians for several decades and looks to continue well into the future.

From March 1 to October 31, the four trout parks sell approximately 400,000 tags and stock approximately 900,000 trout. Rainbow trout are the main species stocked in the four trout parks, but anglers may also catch brown trout which are stocked in the adjacent trout management areas. When anglers happen to catch a brown trout they need to be aware of the statewide length limit of fifteen inches. Rainbow trout, stocked daily in the four trout parks, average 12½ inches in length and are approximately ¾ pound in weight. Anglers can keep four trout daily with a possession limit of eight, which makes for a nice meal.

Each of the four trout parks has a Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) hatchery which raises and stocks trout within the park itself as well as in Missouri's trout management areas. Trout management areas such as the Eleven Point River, Meramec River, and Roubidoux Creek, just to name a few, receive stockings throughout the year. The management areas fall into the categories of Blue, Red, or White Ribbon based



Anglers gather during trout opening day at Bennett Spring State Park.

upon stocking frequency, lure restrictions, and fish length restrictions. Blue Ribbon areas are the most restrictive trout areas and receive no stockings from the hatcheries but rely on self-sustaining populations of trout. Red Ribbon areas are stocked by the hatcheries and have varying lure restrictions and fish length limits. White Ribbon areas are the least restrictive and are stocked routinely by the hatcheries and have no lure restrictions.

Winter trout management areas and Lake Taneycomo are also stocked by MDC hatcheries. The winter trout management areas are popular with the residents of the cities where they are located, such as St. Louis, Kansas City, Mexico, and Columbia. These areas are stocked from November until April when the city lakes will remain cold

enough to sustain trout. Lake Taneycomo provides an excellent trout fishing experience for anglers. This fishery is sustained by stockings from Shepherd of the Hills Hatchery at the base of Table Rock Dam and the Neosho National Fish Hatchery in Neosho.

Trout fishing in Missouri can be found throughout the state and during anytime of the year, so the next time you're looking for a fishing adventure consider one of the many opportunities provided by the Missouri Department of Conservation.

—Mike Mitchell, Bennett Spring Hatchery Manager

Conservation makes Missouri a great place to hunt and fish.

Joplin Office in the Wildcat Glades Conservation and Audubon Center

201 W. Riviera Drive, Suite B, Joplin, MO 64804 •

mdc.mo.gov/node/292



The Joplin Conservation Office, located in the Wildcat Glades Conservation and Audubon Center, is your local connection to Missouri's fish, forests, and wildlife. Stop by and purchase hunting and fishing permits, attend a nature program, go for a hike, enjoy a picnic, or access Shoal Creek. Within the 190 acres of Wildcat Park, you will find a diverse mix of wildlife habitats rich with flora and fauna. From I-44, take exit 6, and turn south on MO-86. Turn right on Riviera Drive to enter Wildcat Park.

HOURS:

Monday–Friday: 8 AM–5 PM
Closed all state holidays.
Audubon Center hours vary.

TO REGISTER FOR A PROGRAM:

Programs are free. Call 417-629-3423 to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list.

SPRING BREAK PASSPORTS TO DISCOVERY!

March 16–24

MONDAY TO SATURDAY: 9 AM–5 PM
SUNDAY: NOON–4 PM



Stop at any of the eight southwest Missouri or southeast Kansas nature centers or historic sites for "Your PEEP Passport" to Discovery. Each site has a passport page with information and questions. Answer the questions and receive a stamp. Collect six stamps and earn a special PEEP (Partnership for Environment Education Program) patch! The hours above are for the Joplin Conservation Office and Audubon Center. Check with the other sites listed on the passport for their hours of operation. Passports are free and no registration is required.

March Events

Wildcat Stream Team Monitoring Day

March 3 • Sunday • 1–5 PM

Wildcat Glades Conservation and Audubon Center

No registration required (ages 10 and up accompanied by an adult)

If you are concerned about water quality in local streams, join our Stream Team and learn how we monitor the health of Shoal and Silver Creeks. You may observe or wear your creek gear and help us collect insects and other critters from the water.

Build A Bat House

March 7 • Thursday • 6–7:30 PM

Walter Woods Conservation Area

Registration required (ages 5 and up)

Join us to build and take home your own bat house. You will also learn a bit about our local bats and receive tips on bat house placement.

Growing Up WILD Workshop

March 23 • Saturday • 9 AM–4 PM

Walter Woods Conservation Area

Registration and a \$7.50 workshop fee are required. Make checks payable to "Missouri Project WILD" (ages 18 and up)

Preschool and primary teachers, day care providers, and Master Naturalists and Gardeners—are you looking for nature-related activities for the very young child? If so, this workshop is for you! You will receive a special activity guide to help children ages 3–7 explore nature and have positive impressions about the natural world as well as lifelong social and academic skills.

Incredible Bird Eggs

March 29 • Friday • 6–7:30 PM

Walter Woods Conservation Area

Registration required (all ages)

Lots of animals lay eggs—including birds. Join us to see the variety of egg sizes, shapes, and colors and to hear about the life of "Jane," the wild turkey in the Missouri Department of Conservation storybook, *See How The Turkey Grows*. We will also go outside to test your observation skills as you search for turkey egg replicas among the grasses and leaves.

*We work with you and for you —
to sustain healthy forests,
fish, and wildlife.*

April Events

Resource Science At Work—Part 1

April 19 • Friday • 6:30–8 PM

Golden Prairie (Golden City, MO)

Registration required (all ages)

Over the next three months, we will explore three different prairies and unique aspects of their ecosystems. For April, we will travel to Golden Prairie to learn about the fascinating greater prairie chicken and other grassland birds that call the prairie home. Want to save the future dates? Part 2 and 3 will be on May 17 and June 21 respectively.

Earth Day Naturescaping And Rain Garden Event

April 20 • Saturday • 9 AM–NOON

Wildcat Glades Conservation and Audubon Center

Registration required (ages 12 and up)

Discover the beauty, diversity, and hardiness of our native vegetation and learn the benefits to both you and wildlife with the Missouri Department of Conservation and Missouri Audubon. We will share basic designs, handouts, tips, and more. Each participant will receive a selection of tree seedlings, shrubs, and flowering plants to take home. *Throughout this Earth Day celebration (April 20), anyone will be able to stop by Wildcat Glades Conservation and Audubon Center for free native tree seedlings and shrubs.*

Stream Team Introductory Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Workshop

April 27 • Saturday • 8:30 AM–5 PM

Wildcat Glades Conservation and Audubon Center

Registration required—see below (ages 12 and up accompanied by an adult)

Now is your chance to learn how we all affect water quality! The Stream Team's Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program is a cooperative program between the Missouri Departments of Natural Resources and Conservation and the Conservation Federation of Missouri to involve citizens in water quality monitoring. The workshop consists of 6 hours of classroom instruction and 1–2 hours on a stream. Workshop attendees interested in monitoring a stream will receive monitoring equipment that includes a kick net, vials, invertebrate photographs, forceps, and magnifiers.

To register, fill out an online registration at mostreamteam.org. For more information contact Susan Higgins, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Susan.Higgins@dnr.mo.gov, 573-526-1002 or 800-781-1989 (voice mail).

Andy Dalton Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center

4897 N. Farm Road 61, Ash Grove, MO 65604 • mdc.mo.gov/node/288

March Events

Handgun Shooting Basics

March 9 • Saturday • 8:30–11:30 AM

Registration required (Ages 18 and up)

Join us to discover the basics of responsible handgun ownership and the joys of shooting. We will cover safety, handgun nomenclature, sight picture and alignment, trigger squeeze, breath control, and more. You may use our handguns or plan to use your own. Please make sure your handgun is completely unloaded before arriving.

Archery Shooting Basics

March 9 • Thursday • 9–11:30 AM

Registration required (all ages)

Join us to discover the basics of archery. We will cover things like bow nomenclature, hand set, bow set, pre-draw, stance, and much more before shooting on the static archery range. You may bring your own bow to the program or use ours.

Turkey Hunting Basics

March 16 • Saturday • 8:30 AM–4:30 PM

Registration required (all ages)

Join us to discover the basics of turkey hunting in the spring. We will cover safety, scouting, calling, proper setup, shotgun ballistics, and much more.

Cross Trail Outfitters Turkey Seminar

March 21 • Thursday • 6–7:30 PM

Registration required (ages 7–17)

Join the families of Cross Trail Outfitters and learn about turkey hunting in Missouri. We will cover calling, setup, and more. This program is designed for youth ages 7–17, but parents will have fun learning too. For more information or to register, email Kirk Bouse at [<khouse@teamcto.org>](mailto:khouse@teamcto.org).

Handgun Shooting Basics

March 23 • Saturday • 8:30–11:30 AM

Registration required (Ages 18 and up)

Join us to discover the basics of responsible handgun ownership and the joys of shooting. We will cover safety, handgun nomenclature, sight picture and alignment, trigger squeeze, breath control, and more. You may use our handguns or plan to use your own. Please make sure your handgun is completely unloaded before arriving.

April Events

Cross Trail Outfitters Turkey Shoot

April 18 • Thursday • 6–7:30 PM

Registration required (ages 7–17)

Join the families of Cross Trail Outfitters and learn about the importance of pattern testing your shotgun before turkey hunting this spring. You may bring your own unloaded shotgun to the program along with the ammunition you use, and we will spend an evening on the shotgun patterning range. This program is designed for youth ages 7–17, but parents will have fun learning too. For more information or to register, email Kirk Bouse at [<khouse@teamcto.org>](mailto:khouse@teamcto.org).

Shotgun Shooting Basics

April 20 • Saturday • 8:30–11:30 AM

Registration required (all ages)

Join us to discover the joys of shotgun shooting. We will discuss shotgun nomenclature, stance, dominant eye, mounting, moving the shotgun, and much more. You may use our shotguns or plan to use your own. Please make sure shotgun is completely unloaded before arriving.

Missouri Black Powder Society Shoot

April 26–28 • Friday–Sunday •

8 AM–4:30 PM

Registration required (all ages)

Join members of the Missouri Black Powder Society for a fun-filled event and learn how to load and fire a muzzleloading shotgun. This is the spring State Shotgun Shoot so there will be lots of different firearms and equipment on display and being used in the competition. For more information about this event, email Larry Sunby at [<missouriblackpowdersociety@yahoo.com>](mailto:missouriblackpowdersociety@yahoo.com).



To get to the Andy Dalton Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center, take US Highway 160 west of Willard, turn south on Farm Road 61, and go 2.5 miles, facility on the west side of road. Facilities include an outdoor education center and archery, rifle, pistol, and shotgun ranges, including skeet and trap.

HOURS:

September 14–April 14

Monday and Thursday: 9 AM–4:30 PM

Friday–Sunday: Noon–4:30 PM

April 15–September 13

Monday: 9 AM–4:30 PM

Thursday: 9 AM–7:30 PM

Friday–Sunday: Noon–4:30 PM

Closed Tuesdays, Wednesdays and all state holidays. Hours are subject to change.

FACILITIES AND FEES:

Available for individual and group use. Call for information and possible restrictions.

- Rifle/pistol range fee: \$3 per booth per hour
- Trap/skeet range fee: \$3 per person per round of 25 clay targets
- Shotgun patterning range: \$3 per person per hour
- Archery range: \$3 per person per hour
- Group use fee: \$20 per hour plus \$3 per round of 25 clay targets

TO REGISTER FOR A PROGRAM:

Programs are free. Call 417-742-4361 or email [<DaltonRange@mdc.mo.gov>](mailto:DaltonRange@mdc.mo.gov) to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list.

Springfield Conservation Nature Center

4601 S. Nature Center Way, Springfield, MO 65804 • mdc.mo.gov/node/287



The Springfield Conservation Nature Center is located in southeast Springfield just west of US-65 off the James River Freeway (US-60). Indoors, enjoy nature exhibits, attend programs, purchase hunting and fishing permits, browse through a nature-related gift shop, and pick up free conservation brochures. Outdoors, enjoy three miles of hiking trails through a variety of natural communities. Call to schedule a naturalist-led program for your organized group.

CURRENT HOURS:

March 1–October 31

Building: Tuesday–Saturday: 8 AM–5 PM

Sunday: Noon–5 PM

Closed Monday

Trails: Sunday–Saturday: 8 AM–9 PM

TO REGISTER FOR A PROGRAM:

Programs are free. Call 417-888-4237 to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list.

Temporary Exhibits

March

**Mingo Swamp Flora And Fauna
Photography contest–2012**

April

Nature Photography
by Donna Groven

March Events

Badge Bonanza

March 5 • Tuesday • 6:30–8 PM

Registration begins February 15 (ages 6 and up)

Attention all scouting and youth organizations! Here's a program to help you earn nature badges on Missouri animals and their characteristics, food chains, habitats, and more. Activities are also open to the public. Please, no younger siblings.

Pallid Sturgeon–Dinosaur Fish

March 12 • Tuesday • 7–7:45 PM

Registration begins March 1 (ages 15 and up)

Learn about the pallid sturgeon and its incredible journey from a path of extinction to increasing abundance in Missouri's large rivers from Missouri Conservation Department Resource Scientist Dave Herzog. In 1992, pallid sturgeons were reared for the first time in captivity at Missouri's Blind Pony Hatchery. Since then, state and federal hatcheries have produced sturgeons for stocking into rivers where the fish once thrived. Research and management continue to improve our understanding of this endangered fish. Like the bald eagle, the pallid sturgeon is anticipated to be yet another conservation success story.

Story Time With Ms. Ladybug

March 13 • Wednesday • 11–11:30 AM

No registration required (ages 2–6)

Join Volunteer Naturalist Joyce Tolliver as she reads a nature story and shares activities with your 2–6 year olds. Please, no organized groups.

Crappie Fishing For Beginners

March 15 • Friday • 6:30–8 PM

Registration begins March 1 (ages 12 and up)

Crappie fishing is a favorite pastime for many anglers in the Ozarks. Whether you fish during winter or wait for them to spawn in the spring, crappie can be caught throughout the year. Join Table Rock Fisheries Biologist Shane Bush and Outdoor Skills Specialist Greg Collier as we explore when, where, and how to catch one of the Ozarks favorite panfish.

The Art Of Woodcarving

March 16 • Saturday • 10–11 AM

Registration begins March 1 (ages 12 and up)

Try your hand at woodcarving with members of the Southern Missouri Woodcarving Artists as they teach carving techniques and show how to transform wood into works of art.

Woodcarving Demonstration

March 16 • Saturday • 10 AM–4 PM

No registration required (all ages)

Visit with members of the Southern Missouri Woodcarving Artists as they share information with the "wood-be" carver, demonstrate carving techniques, show works in progress, and sell some of their art pieces.

Bluebird Basics

March 19 • Tuesday • 6:30–7:30 PM

Registration begins March 1 (ages 5 and up)

Parents, grandparents, and adult mentors, bring your youngster(s) to learn about our beautiful state bird, the eastern bluebird, and assemble a bluebird house (one per family) to take home. Bluebirds like open, rural areas and will not be attracted to or nest in most urban areas.

Nocturnal Animals Puppet Show

March 22 • Friday • 5–5:45 PM or 6:30–7:15 PM

Registration begins March 1 (all ages)

The night is filled with the strange sounds of hoots, howls, squeaks, and chirps, but there's no need to be afraid of the animals, their sounds, or of the dark. Join us as we team with the Springfield-Greene County Library to go "in the dark" in celebration of the library's One Book–One Community event, the Big Read. Wear your pajamas (if you want) as we shed some light on these nighttime noisemakers to learn what goes on when the sun goes down.

Hiking Club

March 23 • Saturday • 8 AM–5 PM

Registration begins March 1 (ages 18 and up)

Hike off-trail in the Mark Twain National Forest near Chadwick with Volunteer Naturalist Mike Mihalik. Meet at the nature center and carpool. Bring a sack lunch and water and wear comfortable hiking shoes. **Hike is four miles and rated moderate to difficult.**

Parents As Teachers Story Time

March 26 • Tuesday • 9:30, 10:30 or 11:30 AM

No registration required (ages 0–5)

Parent Educators from Parents As Teachers will offer a *Nature At Its Best* story time. Enjoy stories, activities, and finger plays. Each session is forty-five minutes in length.

Discover Missouri Natural Areas

March 26 • Tuesday • 7–8 PM

Registration begins March 1 (ages 14 and up)

Conservation Department Natural Areas Coordinator Mike Leahy will share his firsthand experiences with Missouri's designated Natural Areas featured in his book, *Discover Missouri Natural Areas—A Guide To 50 Great Places*. The Missouri Natural Areas System protects the best remaining examples of our state's natural heritage from glades to prairies and from fens to big rivers. You'll be inspired to visit these areas to create your own firsthand experience. Books will be available to purchase and to have autographed following the program. **Attention Hikers and Trekkers:** Network with other hikers and outdoor enthusiasts during a social hour from 8–9 pm. Share your knowledge about places to hike, your experiences, and contact information if you so desire.

Spring Wildflower Hike

March 27 • Wednesday • 1–2:30 PM

Registration begins March 1 (ages 7 and up)

Take a stroll on the trails for a close look at spring wildflowers.

Conservation Kids' Club Just Like Lewis And Clark II

March 28 • Thursday • 6:30–7:45 PM

Registration begins March 1 (ages 7–12)

Lewis and Clark had to find their way to the Pacific and back and keep their crew fed along the way. Learn how to hunt and trap and "dead reckon" your way home in this second Lewis and Clark skills night. Please, no younger siblings and only one adult per group of kids.

We help people discover nature.

Springfield Conservation Nature Center

4601 S. Nature Center Way, Springfield, MO 65804 •

• mdc.mo.gov/node/287



Conservation TEEN Club Hatchery Tour And Hike

March 30 • Saturday • 9 AM–4 PM

Registration begins March 1 (ages 12–17)

Join us as we tour Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery and then after lunch take a short hike at Henning Conservation Area. Dress for the weather. Lunch and transportation will be provided.

Little Acorns

Please limit to one per month.

Programs are 45 minutes in length.

March Events

Spring Peepers

March 7 • Thursday • 11 AM or 1:30 PM

March 16 • Saturday • 11 AM

Registration begins March 1 (ages 3–6)

It's time for some frog-frolicking fun exploring the life cycle and world of the tiny peepers.

Tots And Toads

March 8 • Friday • 11 AM or 1:30 PM

Registration begins March 1 (ages 3–6)

Missouri toads are colorful, harmless, vocal, and valuable. We'll have fun learning about these "toad"-ally cool creatures.

Salamander Slide

March 21 • Thursday • 9:30 AM or 11 AM

March 23 • Saturday • 11 AM

Registration begins March 1 (ages 3–6)

Meet the salamander family! We'll investigate some of their special features and find out why salamanders aren't lizards.

April Events

Egg-squisite Eggs

April 3 • Wednesday • 11 AM or 1:30 PM

Registration begins March 15 (ages 3–6)

Bring your favorite little ones and learn egg-sactly how and why animals begin their lives in these wonderful little packages.

Beautiful Blooms

April 5 • Friday • 9:30 AM or 11 AM

Registration begins March 15 (ages 3–6)

Everyone loves flowers and spring is a great time to see them. Join us for a short hike (weather allowing) as we learn what special jobs flowers do. We'll make a "flowery" craft to take home.

Snappers, Sliders, And Stinkpots

April 19 • Friday • 11 AM or 1:30 PM

April 20 • Saturday • 11 AM

Registration begins April 2 (ages 3–6)

Turtles come in many shapes and sizes. They also have some pretty silly names. Learn the names of common local turtles and discover where and how they live.

April Events

Native Plant Sale

April 6 • Saturday • 9 AM–3 PM

No registration required (all ages)

Naturescaping emphasizes landscaping with native plant species providing urban habitat for a diversity of wildlife and offering alternatives to the traditional water- and chemical-dependent manicured lawn. A series of guest speakers will share the benefits of incorporating native plants into your landscape. The day will also include exhibitors and a plant sale. Call the nature center to receive a flier listing the day's activities.

Primitive Skills Series Useful Plant Hike

April 7 • Sunday • 1–3 PM

Registration begins April 2 (ages 15 and up)

Plants have always been important to humans for food, medicine, and other purposes. Volunteer Specialist Don Brink will explore the folklore and modern uses of several Missouri plants.

Story Time With Ms. Ladybug

April 10 • Wednesday • 11–11:30 AM

No registration required (ages 2–6)

Join Volunteer Naturalist Joyce Tolliver as she reads a nature story and shares activities with your 2–6 year olds. Please, no organized groups.

Spring Wildflower Hike

April 10 • Wednesday • 1–2:30 PM

Registration begins April 2 (ages 7 and up)

Take a stroll with us on the trails for a close look at spring wildflowers

Babes In The Woods

April 12 • Friday • 10–11 AM

April 13 • Saturday • 10–11 AM

Registration begins April 2 (ages 0–2)

Discover nature with your 0–2 year old on this special stroller walk to celebrate Earth Day.

Hiking Club

April 13 • Saturday • 8 AM–5 PM

Registration begins April 2 (Ages 18 and up)

Explore the White River Valley Trail System at Table Rock State Park with Volunteer Naturalist Carmen Hallock. Meet at the nature center and carpool. Bring a sack lunch and water and wear comfortable hiking shoes. Hike is five miles and rated difficult.

Spring Wildflower Hike

April 17 • Wednesday • 1–2:30 PM

Registration begins April 2 (ages 7 and up)

Take a stroll with us on the trails for a close look at spring wildflowers.

Ozark Whittlers & Woodcarvers

April 20 • Saturday • 10 AM–4 PM

No registration required (all ages)

Stop by to see members of the Ozark Whittlers & Woodcarvers transform wood into treasures.

Spring Hike

April 20 • Saturday • 1–4 PM

Registration begins April 2 (families, ages 8 and up with an adult mentor)

Parents, grandparents, and adult mentors, bring your youngster(s) and enjoy a naturalist-guided spring hike at Busiek State Forest and Wildlife Area. Hike will be slow to moderate as we take our time to learn about the plants and animals that inhabit the forest. Meet at the nature center and carpool. Bring water and wear comfortable hiking shoes. Hike is approximately three miles and is of moderate difficulty.

Hike For Homeschoolers

April 23 • Tuesday • 1–3 PM

Registration begins April 2 (ages 5 and up)

Join us for a naturalist-guided hike and learn about the plants and animals that live at the nature center. Wear comfortable hiking shoes and feel free to bring journals, cameras, and binoculars.

Conservation Kids' Club Voices of Missouri's Toads And Frogs

April 25 • Thursday • 6:30–7:45 PM

Registration begins April 2 (ages 7–12)

Like birds, toads and frogs are often noticed first by their mating calls. They fill the day and night with peeps, trills, and snores. Learn about their habits and how to identify their calls during this month's meeting. Please, no younger siblings and only one adult per group of kids.



Conservation TEEN Club Pond Fishing And Hike

April 27 • Saturday • 9 AM–4:30 PM

Registration begins April 2 (ages 12–17)

Springtime in the Ozarks means fishing! Come and have a great time hiking to the wetland area and chasing lunkers at the Walter Woods Conservation Area. Fishing will be catch-and-release and participants 16 years of age and older must have a valid fishing permit. Wear comfortable hiking shoes and dress for the weather. Lunch and transportation will be provided.

Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery and Conservation Center

483 Hatchery Road, Branson, MO 65616 • mdc.mo.gov/node/290



The Fish Hatchery and Conservation Center is located on 221 acres in Branson off Highway 165 next to Table Rock Dam. Outdoors, visitors will experience an active fish hatchery with 700,000 rainbow and brown trout in 30 pools with opportunities to feed the fish. Indoors, enjoy a 3,500 gallon aquarium and hands-on nature exhibits and purchase hunting and fishing permits. The area also features four hiking trails, a picnic area, a boat ramp, and access to Lake Taneycomo.

FACILITY HOURS:

Memorial Day–Labor Day

Sunday–Saturday: 9 AM–6 PM

Remainder of Year

Sunday–Saturday: 9 AM–5 PM

AREA AND TRAIL HOURS:

4 AM–10 PM

The area is open to fishing 24 hours daily, but special permits and regulations do apply. Check the current fishing regulations or call for details.

TO REGISTER FOR A PROGRAM:

Programs are free. Call 417-334-4865, Ext. 0, to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list.

FISHING

LAKE TANEYCOMO:

Before fishing on Lake Taneycomo, become familiar with the regulations and restrictions. Come by for a free brochure of the entire lake including fishing accesses. For specific details about trout fishing here and across the state, visit mdc.mo.gov/node/5603.

March Events

Bluebird Workshop

March 16 • Saturday • 10–11:30 AM

Registration required (families)

It is time to be thinking about Missouri's state bird, the beautiful Eastern bluebird. Bring your family to this workshop and you will not only learn about bluebirds, but you will also build your own bluebird nesting box to take home and get tips on how to be a good bluebird landlord.

One box per family and each family must make their own separate reservation. Bring a hammer.



Hummingbirds

March 30 • Saturday • 2–3:30 PM

Registration required (families)

Now is a great time to get your hummingbird feeders ready for our returning hummingbirds. This program will help you understand what hummingbirds eat, how to attract them, how to plant hummingbird-friendly plants, and feeder maintenance. Each family will receive a free jewelweed plant to take home.

Attend the Bluebird Workshop and make your own nesting box to take home.

April Events

Hunger Games Hike

April 6 • Saturday • 10 AM–NOON

Registration required (families and scouts ages 11 and up)

This is the first of several "build upon" programs featuring skills from the book/movie *Hunger Games*. This will be a safe teen-friendly hike for both girls and boys in which individuals or small groups hike a trail and participate in three knowledge or skill activities. Upon completing these activities, you'll earn the opportunity to shoot archery at safe targets. No previous skill with archery is required. Bring a water bottle and dress for the weather.

Earth Day Celebration

April 20 • Saturday • 10 AM–2 PM

No registration required (all ages)

Join us for our 6th annual Earth Day Celebration. There will be several learning stations to help you become a better ecological citizen. With 2013 being the "Year of Water Cooperation," several stations will involve how to use our water resources wisely. Stations will include habitat games, recycling, nature art, hypermiling and alternative vehicles, water critters, reptiles, and much more. The first 500 visitors will receive a free tree seedling.

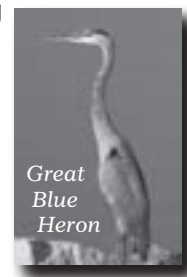
Ask The Naturalist

A recent visitor to the hatchery asked, "**What is a rookery and where can I see one?**"

A rookery is a best described as a group or colony of nesting birds or mammals. The original name "rook" is for a type of gregarious crow (*Corvus frugilegus*) found in Europe. Today, it can apply to other colonial nesting animals like penguins, seals, crows, and herons that make nests very close to each other. The best examples of a rookery in Missouri are the nests of great blue herons.

When you visit the Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery, look for the large heron rookery near the boat ramp. From the top of the ramp, look across Taneycomo and you will see several large nests in the tops of the largest trees. Spring is a good time to see the herons because they are busy feeding their chicks. While Taneycomo has 22 miles of fishing opportunities for both humans and birds, some herons try and take the easy way out by visiting the hatchery for their meal. This is why new screen covers were installed on the rearing pools to keep them out. You might say that the hatchery staff has a love/hate relationship with herons. They are beautiful and graceful, but they see the hatchery as an all-you-can-eat buffet.

Herons are a part of a healthy aquatic habitat across our state. They are wading birds that feed almost exclusively on fish. They are opportunists that feed primarily on slow and weak fish. They are also the beneficiaries of the hatchery's bounty of trout. Just as humans realize that conservation makes Missouri a great place to hunt and fish, so, too, do herons. We hope that you come to the hatchery to see both the trout and the large heron rookery.



Great
Blue
Heron

— John Miller, Interpretive Center Manager

Southwest Regional Office

2630 N. Mayfair Avenue, Springfield, MO 65803 • mdc.mo.gov/node/257

Spawning Crappie

As the days get longer and nighttime temperatures begin to creep upward, many southwest Missouri anglers will begin to dream of jigheads, minnow buckets, and spawning crappie.

Crappie are one of the most sought after fish in Missouri. The abundance of lakes and reservoirs in southwest Missouri make it a mecca for crappie fishing. When crappie are in shallow water and spawning, they are easy to catch and can make anyone feel like fishing legend Bill Dance. However, on those spring days when crappie are hard to come by, two questions anglers should keep in mind are "Where are we at in the spawn?" and "Where are the fish?"

A good understanding of the spawning process can go a long way when trying to gather some crappie for a spring fish fry. Adult crappie spawn as early as the end of March in southern Missouri and into early June in northern Missouri. Water temperature and photoperiod (day length) are the two major factors which determine the timing of the spawn. While there are varying opinions on when crappie spawning peaks, spawning is initiated when water temperature reaches 55°F. As temperatures approach this level, crappie leave their winter patterns and move to prespawn locations near spawning banks. These prespawn locations vary from one lake to another, but three things to key in on are structure, deep water, and channel drop-offs. In large coves, this can mean deep water in the middle. In smaller coves, the staging area might be a channel drop-off at the mouth. Standing timber or submerged brush in this deep water are favorite places for prespawn crappie.

Once conditions are right, male crappie move onto spawning banks and begin to make nests. While waiting for the right time to join the males, female crappie will still be found in deeper water. The best spawning banks will consist of a pea gravel bottom. When searching for spawning crappie, it is important to realize they can spawn up to 4 feet deeper than the clarity of the water. In parts of Table Rock Lake, for example, this means crappie spawn in 10 to 14 feet of water.

Cold fronts and temperature drops often cause spawning to be delayed or interrupted and push crappie back out to prespawn locations. In large reservoirs, it is key to realize that spawning usually occurs in the upper parts of the lake first, as these areas are the first to warm. Once crappie eggs are laid, it takes them three days to hatch. After hatching, crappie fry remain near the bottom for several more days before becoming mobile and swimming away.

Many anglers take time off work in the spring with hopes of hitting the peak of the spawn. Although it is impossible to predict exactly when spawning will begin each year, the majority of spawning usually occurs in southwest Missouri reservoirs during the second half of April and the first half of May. If you fish the banks for spawning crappie for two hours and don't get a bite, it does not mean the fish aren't biting, you might simply need to move to the middle of the cove or the closest creek channel to find those prespawn locations. More information on crappie fishing can be found online at mdc.mo.gov/node/2475.

— Adam Boman, Fisheries Management Biologist



The Southwest Regional Office is conveniently located just west of the intersection of US-65 and Kearney in Springfield. The public may obtain information on land management, nuisance wildlife, educational opportunities, river and pond management, and more, as well as purchase hunting and fishing permits and obtain area brochures for Conservation Department areas.

HOURS: Monday–Friday: 8 AM–5 PM
Closed all state holidays

PHONE: 417-895-6880

Hunter Education



Register online for all Hunter Education courses at
mdc.mo.gov/node/3722.

A complete listing of courses is also included on this website.

These free 10-hour courses are required for anyone born on or after January 1, 1967, who wants to hunt with firearms in Missouri. Students ages 11 and older must pass a test at the end of the course to be certified. Students under 15 years old must

be accompanied by an adult and show proof of age. If you have any previous Missouri hunting or fishing permits or a Missouri Conservation Heritage Card, bring them to class.

Location	Date	Day/Time
Andy Dalton Shooting Range	March 1 & 2	Friday, 6–10pm
For questions, call 417-742-4361		Saturday, 8am–6pm
Andy Dalton Shooting Range	April 5 & 6	Friday, 6–10pm
For questions, call 417-742-4361		Saturday, 8am–6pm
Springfield Conservation Nature Center	April 12 & 13	Friday, 6–9pm
For questions, call 417-888-4237		Saturday, 8am–5pm

Spring Turkey Hunting Seasons

Youth Firearms Season

April 6 and 7

Spring Firearms Season

April 15 to May 5

Spring Turkey Hunting Clinic

April 4 • Thursday • 6:30–8:30 PM

Clinic held at the Southwest Regional Office. Call 417-895-6880 to register.

Missouri offers some of the best turkey hunting in the nation. Participants will get this spring's outlook, regulation and permit information, and tips for safe, successful turkey hunting.

Conservation Area Showcase:

Robert E. Talbot Conservation Area

LOCATION: Robert E. Talbot (Talbot) Conservation Area (CA) is located in Lawrence County on Highway 96 just 5 miles west of Miller. The area is named after former Conservation Commissioner Robert E. Talbot. Talbot CA is positioned on the transition zone between upland prairie and open woodlands/savannas. As a result, a wide variety of bird and plant species can be found.

ABOUT THIS AREA: The first land purchase was made on the Spring River to provide access to the stream. Throughout the 80s and 90s, additional upland ground was added to bring the current size to just over 4300 acres. Most of the open land was fescue pasture and the timber was cut for lumber and sprayed to provide additional pasture while the land was still in private ownership. When the Missouri Department of Conservation acquired the property, many of the open lands were converted to native warm season grasses and the timber was allowed to rest and recover from abuse. In the early days, a demonstration farm was established and later abandoned in the early 90s and has since been managed much like the rest of the area. As managers began to understand the importance of managing the woodland resources in a way that more closely mimicked historical conditions, many degraded woodlands were thinned and burned over a series of years to create open woodlands/savannas that have a rich understory of native grasses and forbs. In fact, some of the best examples of open woodlands in southwest Missouri can be found on the area.

Many of the grassland areas are also managed in a way to approximate historical conditions. Prescribed burning is conducted every two to three years on all grasslands and about 800 acres are managed using the fire-grazing interaction, also known as patch-burn-grazing, to provide variation in vegetation height and increase forb abundance.

While managing for historical processes is important at Talbot CA, much of the area is still managed with food plot plantings of corn, soybeans, sunflower, milo, and green browse plantings. These plots provide food resources for a variety of species including doves, young bobwhite quail, and deer. Old field areas, ground that has been previously cropped but allowed to go fallow, provide additional habitat and are especially good for bobwhite quail and rabbits.

FISHING: Talbot CA provides good fishing opportunities on a variety of ponds and two miles of Spring River access. The ponds are stocked periodically with largemouth bass, bluegill, and catfish and two large ponds—one seven acres and one four acres—provide the easiest access by land and boat. However, other small ponds scattered around the area also provide good fishing opportunities. These ponds are often off of the beaten path but can be located on area maps. Please refer to the *Fishing Regulations* summary for all length and creel limits that apply.

HUNTING: Most open land acres are managed for early successional species, primarily bobwhite quail, but rabbit, deer, and turkey also benefit. In addition, some dove fields are planted annually to provide high quality hunting opportunities. Duck hunting can be excellent especially during a hard freeze when birds are forced to head to the Spring River. A 25-acre wetland provides very good hunting during teal season and on migration days. Turkey hunting can be good at times, especially if one hunts during the middle of the week and stays until the 1 p.m. closure. Turkeys are found in two distinctive habitat types. During early spring, hens disperse from the Spring River bottoms to the uplands to find food and suitable nesting sites. The gobblers soon follow. These birds can be found in the woodland areas and brushy fencerows scattered across the upland portion. However, a portion of the birds remain in the river bottom to complete the mating ritual. Hunters can find success in either area but should keep in mind that late in the season most gobblers have been called to or spooked so hunters should use more subtle and patient tactics. Please consult the *Hunting and Trapping Regulations* summary and the *Fall Deer and Turkey* booklet for detailed regulations.

WILDLIFE VIEWING: Forest birds and shrub-scrub birds can also be found in appropriate habitats. One of the neatest bird watching opportunities is the great blue heron rookery found along the Spring River in the southwestern portion of the area. Herons traditionally use this area to raise their young in the spring and can be very vocal when many birds are using the site. Maps of the Spring River Trail which leads to the heron rookery can be found online or on area bulletin boards. For more information, visit <mdc.mo.gov/a8037>.

— Frank Loncarich, Wildlife Management Biologist



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Missouri Department of Conservation



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25 years

The nature center will be celebrating its 25th Anniversary in October, and we want to hear from you. Do you have a special story and/or photo you'd like to share? Please send stories, remembrances, and photos by e-mail to <SprfdNatureCenter@mdc.mo.gov> or drop copies by the front desk. Stories and photos may be used in special anniversary programming and exhibits and will not be returned. Thank you.